

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 HA-05 MCT-01
/115 W

-----127863 062028Z /42

R 061746Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6344
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION SINAI
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR US EG IS PBOR PDEV
SUBJECT: PRESS FOCUSES ON U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS AS
- BEGIN VISIT NEARS

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REF: CAIRO 6942

SUMMARY: PEACE PROCESS COVERAGE MARCH 6 FOCUSED ON
INTERPRETATION OF RES 242 AS BASIS OF CURRENT "CRISIS"
IN ISRAEL AND OF LATENT U.S.-ISRAELI STRAINS. NOTES
APPROVINGLY GOLDA'S CONTENTION 242 APPLICABLE ALL
FRONTS. WEIZMAN AGAIN OBSERVED PREDICTING RESUMED

DIRECT TALKS POSSIBLE. ATHERTON RETURNS WITH BEGIN REPLY. SAUDIS HINTED DISPLEASED THAT U.S. LAX WITH ISRAEL. ATTACKS ON PLO DIMINISH, VERBAL GUNS TRAINED ON SYRIA, IRAQ AND SOVIETS. TREATMENT CONTINUES REFLECT CONCERN THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WILL BLINK FIRST IN TALKS WITH BEGIN. END SUMMARY.

1. PROBLEMS WITH 242. PRESS MARCH 6 GAVE MAJOR COVER- . AGE TO "CRISIS" IN ISRAEL OVER BEGIN PEACE POLICY. OPPOSITION REPORTED SHARPLY CRITICAL HIS INTERPRETATION OF RES 242 AS INAPPLICABLE TO WEST BANK. GOLDA MEIR, SEEN LEADING CRITICS, QUOTED THAT BEGIN INTRANSIGENCE THREATENS UNDERMINE ONLY BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. GOLDA REPORTEDLY MAINTAINED 242 ALSO APPLICABLE TO WEST BANK. WITH EQUAL PROMINENCE, 242 DEPICTED AS BASIS FOR NEW ISRAELI-U.S. DIFFERENCES. AHRAH REFERRED TO NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE CONTENTION THAT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TURNING ITS BACK ON 242.

2. LOOKING TO WEIZMAN. WEIZMAN, WHO EGYPTIANS PORTRAY AS PRAGMATIC ALTERNATIVE TO "DEVIOUS IDEOLOGUE" BEGIN, QUOTED ON DEPARTURE FOR U.S. THAT VISITS OF ISRAELI LEADERSHIP TO WASHINGTON MIGHT LEAD TO RESUMED DIRECT TALKS BY END OF THIS MONTH. REPORTS ALSO NOTED, HOWEVER, HIS VIEW THAT USG ERRED IN LINKING AIRCRAFT SALES TO ISRAEL, EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA.
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3. ATHERTON BACK WITH BEGIN REPLY. PRESS NOTES ATHERTON BEARER OF BEGIN REPLY ON HIS RETURN TO CAIRO MARCH 5. "WELL INFORMED ISRAELI SOURCES" SAY BEGIN MESSAGE DEALS WITH "BASIC ISSUES", BUT PRESS HAS NO DETAILS.

4. SAUDIS DISPLEASED? ACCORDING REPORTS, ATHERTON WAS TO HAVE VISITED SAUDI ARABIA EN ROUTE TO EGYPT, BUT VISIT POSTPONED AT SAUDI REQUEST BECAUSE CROWN PRINCE FAHD AND FONMIN SAUD "NOT AT HOME." UNIDENTIFIED OBSERVERS DO NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY VISIT POSTPONED OR CANCELLED BY SAUDIS "TO EXPRESS DISAPPOINTMENT WITH U.S. LAX ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL."

5. ARAB OPPONENTS. ATTACKS ON PLO, WHICH HAVE BEEN EDITORIAL STAPLE OF PAST DAYS, DIMINISHED. ARAFAT, HOWEVER, OBSERVED VISITING MOSCOW AS PART OF SERIES OF PILGRIMAGES THERE BY REJECTIONIST LEADERS. PEOPLES ASSEMBLY SPEAKER MAR'I, MARCH 5, RECEIVED "PALESTINIAN DELEGATION" OF EIGHT PERSONS LED BY DOMESTICATED PLO REP SAID KAMAL. NO DETAILS. SYRIA CRITICIZED FOR CREATING EXPLOSIVE SITUATION IN

LEBANON AS ITS FORCES "STREAM INTO BEIRUT". IRAQI BAATH
RAKED OVER COALS FOR ITS INTERNAL FAILURES.

6. SOVIETS. AHRAH'S LENGTHY EDITORIAL CONCLUDED
WITH CLAIM THAT SOVIETS WISH ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT TO
CONTINUE SO THAT HOT SPOT WILL CREATE ROOM FOR INFIL-
TRATION IN REGION.

7. COMMENT: FOCUS ON 242 AND DYNAMICS OF U.S.-ISRAELI
RELATIONSHIP IS TELLING. WHILE EGYPT MAY NOT WISH TO
OVERLOAD CIRCUITS WITH PUBLIC CALLS FOR U.S. STEAD-
FASTNESS, THEIR CONCERN THAT PRES CARTER WILL YIELD
TO BEGIN PRESSURE IS PALPABLE. EGYPTIANS CLEARLY DISMAYED
BY BEGIN APPROACH TO 242--HIS LATEST "STALLING TACTIC"--
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ISSUE OVER WHICH THEY HAVE EXPENDED SO MUCH DIPLOMATIC

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ENERGY IN PAST. THEY WILL EXPECT U.S. TO IMPRESS ON
BEGIN THAT 242 INDEED APPLICABLE TO ALL FRONTS AND
SUPPLEMENTED BY FIRM U.S. ADHERENCE TO ASWAN PRINCIPLES.
EILTS

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